

CLASSIC ART OF DANCING

FOUND IN THE BALLET, DE-CLARES MME. CAVALAZZI.

And Not in the Style Introduced by Isadora Duncan—Thirty American Girls Now Practising It in a School Just Opened Here—Difficult to Acquire.

When the ballet was a more important feature of opera than it is to-day, Malvina Cavalazzi was the idol of the audiences at the old Academy of Music. Those were the golden days of her career, although she continued to appear in pantomime roles at the Empire until a few years ago.

After that she taught pantomime and dancing in the London school of which Berthold Tree is the head. Now she has come to the Metropolitan Opera House to found the new ballet school which the managers have added to the already long list of the opera houses' departments. The school opened last week.

Mme. Cavalazzi is not a stranger even to the big yellow opera house uptown. She danced there with Abbey & Grau after her father-in-law, Col. Mapleson, had given up the Academy, and she came back to the Metropolitan in its German

days to dance for one season under the German administration. So she does not feel herself strange in the Metropolitan, great as the changes have been since the time she was there.

"I have thirty girls in my class to begin with," she told THE ST. NEWS, "and they must be Americans, according to the rule made by the directors of the opera. They will not allow any foreigners to have the benefit of the instruction and the excellent contracts the pupils are to receive as soon as they are prepared to join the corps de ballet. That they are real Americans you can tell from their names."

The reporter listened. Mme. Cavalazzi has been in English speaking countries for almost thirty years, but she still speaks the language with an accent that could never have been made anywhere outside of Italy. So she said "Smitt" when she tried to read Smith out of a list of names teeming with Browns, Joneses, Whites and other names of undoubted native origin.

This seemed to answer the objection to the formation of a ballet school for American girls on the ground that the compensation was too small to attract them to such a career.

"The directors have made a most liberal contract with the pupils," Mme

Cavalazzi said. "Any girl in Italy, where I studied, or in any country of Europe would be delighted at any such engagement to begin with."

"They tell me that the American girls are impatient and want to be full fledged dancers right away, but I have told them all that they must expect to wait and work for at least a year. It will then be time for them to begin to dance on the stage."

"My thirty girls have seen that they must work very hard. So far not one of them has shown any disposition to drop out. They are nearly all without experience. Those that have taken lessons do not always know as much as they think they know."

Mme. Cavalazzi chuckled at some memory, and then began a brief lecture on important points in the matter of preparing to dance in the ballet.

"One girl who had danced a little," she explained, "told me that she could stand on her toe. I was not astonished. To stand on the toe you must have worked and studied a long time."

"Gradually you practice rising on the big toe. The muscles by degrees become trained to bear the weight of the body. The nerves too become accustomed to the strain, and slowly, very slowly, little by little the dancer learns to rise on her toes until it is as easy to her as to stand on her feet."

"The weight is so evenly distributed throughout the muscles of the legs by this time that they should not exhibit the least visible sign of effort. When the dancer can so move as not to disturb the normal arrangement of the muscles, then—here the professor's eyes were bright with enthusiasm—"then can she really say that she can stand on the toe. If not—"

"And this girl," she continued, "this girl, she try to stand on her toe. Of course, she could not even rise firmly on her toe."

"When she did get up in a certain way she did it so badly that all the weight fell on the knee and the upper leg. Then there were bunches of muscles in her calves and thighs, and her knees were thick from the weight of her body."

"I said to her, 'No, my dear, that is not the way to stand on the toe,' and I leaned down to show her what she should not do."

"I put her foot into the right position, explained that there should not be large bunches of muscles and told her she did not know how to stand on the toe, but she said that she knew that already."

In spite of the humility of this aspiring ballerina there are not to be in the near future any prima assoluta by name Jones, Brown or Smith. The pupils enrolled at the ballet school are not of the age to make the premiere danseuse. That is impossible even by law. The girls who have put themselves under the care of Mme. Cavalazzi range from 14 to 20, while the women who have come to the top as dancers began years earlier.

"I was only 18," said the professor with a reminiscent sigh as she spoke, "when I began my lessons at a private ballet school in Milan. All the women ambitious to become premiere must study as children. Then the whole-body may be trained to the necessary supple-

ness. Even the bones are made to grow as they should and the muscles become the slaves of the dancer."

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